

# The Builder.

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**A**MONGST the artisans of England are a large number of singularly intelligent, shrewd, and sensible men,—much larger than is supposed by the majority of those who, by their position, are removed from contact with them: men worthy of respect, and deserving the greatest consideration. Many of the multitudinous essays by working men, On the Sabbath, which were called forth not long ago by offered premiums, astonished those who were appointed to decide on their relative merits, by the closeness of reasoning, ability, and wisdom which they displayed.

Within a recent period there have been in our own pages more than one communication penned by hands made heavy and intractable by the mallet, yet full of sound sense, and shewing enlarged and comprehensive views. These are not men to be classed with the vulgar and uncared for. "These are not vulgar people," says Dante, "merely because they live in small cottages, lowly places: but those are vulgar who, by their thoughts and deeds, strive to shut out any view of beauty." There are vulgar rich men as well as vulgar poor men. Being poor is not of itself a disqualification for being a gentleman. To be a gentleman is to be elevated above others in sentiment rather than situation. And the poor man with an enlarged and pure mind may be happier, too, than his richer neighbour without this elevation. Let the former only look at nature with an enlightened mind,— "a mind which can see and adore the Creator in his works, can consider them as demonstrations of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, and his truth; this man is greater, as well as happier, in his poverty, than the other in his riches. The one is but little higher than the beast, the other but a little lower than an angel."

Our simple object, however, is to say, in plain words, that the honest, upright, intelligent artisan deserves the consideration of all who have it in their power to improve or ameliorate his condition. And we are impelled to this by the recent receipt of several saddening letters from men of this class, overcome by hope deferred. "These are records of suffering; can we wonder that they are interspersed with complaints and repinings? We may say to the writers of them, with Feltham, that "We do not wisely when we vent complaint and censure. Human nature is more sensible of smart in suffering than of pleasure in rejoicing, and the present endurance easily take up our thoughts. We cry out for a little pain, when we do but smile for a great deal of contentment."

But their complaints are too serious,—the grounds for them too apparent, for the reproach conveyed in this to apply. They have laboured all their lives; they are willing still to labour, but they can find no employer.

The story of some amongst them who have work is sad enough: take the following, and let it not provoke derision, but desire to aid:—

S. Jones of Nayland.

"I am a journeyman carpenter," says one, "thirty-eight years of age, and it is my firm conviction that I have worked physically upwards of ten hours on an average every day of my life since I was twelve years old, and worked hard too. From twelve to fifteen I laboured for an existence with a donkey and water-butt on a carriage, and after a while with a horse-butt, loading and drawing water from the river Lea, hawking it about the streets in a suburban village, and selling of it for a penny a turn,—a turn being the quantity of four common pails, which I used to carry in large ones with a pair of yokes, and empty into the butt or vessel of those that bought it. At fifteen I went to the trade; at eighteen my master broke. I turned journeyman at twenty, married [There's the rub!], and three months afterwards fell out of work, and was out six months. I have been the father of ten children, five alive and five dead. I have been obliged to work (or leave the employ) Sundays, Good Fridays, and Christmas days, whilst my employers have taken their carriage and gone to church, and all day and the major part of the night for weeks consecutively. As I lived upwards of two miles from the place, I have slept as I walked home, and once ran against a wall in my sleep. I so deranged the system by excessive labour, that it produced a deception of the vision, so that all manner of hideous figures would appear to dance or walk before me, and have appeared to be so close to me sometimes, that I have put my hand out to touch them. It has left a speck in each eye up to the present time, as a mark of the effect of excessive labour on the organ of vision. I have ever been abstemious in the necessaries of life, and never indulged in the luxuries; yet with all my working and abstemiousness I am still miserably poor, and I am not an exception to my class."

Truly, as one of the same grade said in a letter to the *Times* a few days ago,—

"If the possessors of wealth could see beneath the surface of a poor man's life, or obtain a secret view of his home, they would do their utmost to alleviate the condition of respectable but poor mechanics."

Words to men in want may be called wind; nevertheless, there may be comfort in the reminder that there is still good in their struggles. Hear what the benevolent Channing says:—

"I have faith in labour, and I see the goodness of God in placing us in a world where labour alone can keep us alive. I would not change, if I could, our subjection to physical laws, our exposure to hunger and cold, and the necessity of constant conflicts with the material world. I would not, if I could, so temper the elements that they should infuse into us only grateful sensations, that they should make vegetation so exuberant as to anticipate every want; and the mineral so ductile as to offer no resistance to our strength and skill. Such a world would make a contemptible race. Man owes his growth, his energy, chiefly to that striving of the will, that conflict with difficulty, which we call effort. Easy, pleasant work does not make robust minds, does not give men such a consciousness of their powers, does not train to endurance, to perseverance, to steady force of will, that force without which all other acquisitions avail nothing."

And then listen to what Charles Mackay, the poet of the people, sings of this same endurance:—

"Were the lonely scorn never bound  
In the rude, cold grasp of the rotting ground;  
Did the frigid frost never harden up  
The mould above its bursting cap:  
Were it never soaked in the rain and hail,  
Or chilled by the breath of the wintry gale,  
It would not sprout in the sunshine free,  
Or give the promise of a tree;

Or stand in the woods among its peers,  
Fed by the dew of a thousand years."

So thou, O man of a noble soul,  
Starting in view of a glorious goal,  
Wert thou never exposed to the blasts forlorn—  
The storms of sorrow—the sheets of scorn?  
Wert thou never refined in pitiless fire,  
From the dross of thy sloth and mean desire;  
Wert thou never taught to feel and know  
That the truest love has its roots in woe,  
Thou wouldst never unravel the complex plan,  
Or reach half way to the perfect man;  
Thou wouldst never attain the tranquil height  
Where wisdom purifies the sight,  
And God unfolds to the humblest gaze  
The bliss and beauty of His ways."

One of the correspondents to whom we are addressing these few recollections of what others have said rather than thoughts of our own, inquires as to the advisability of emigrating to Australia, no prospect opening to him here. We would say, obtain proper advice and guidance, and go by all means. If you are able and willing to labour, you will not fail to find there a fair field for your exertions.\* Emigration generally we regard as a cure for many of our social evils. Admit that under better arrangements England could maintain in comfort a much larger number of persons than is now the case, still it is certain that the alterations necessary must be the work of time, and those who find it impossible to obtain remunerative employment here will do well not to wait, but turn their attention to other quarters, and seek "fresh lands and pastures new."

Pent in eyeds and closes narrow,  
Breathing pestilential air,  
Crush'd beneath oppression's barrow,  
Paint with famine, bowed with care,—  
(Giant affliction's sons and daughters!)  
Why so slow to hear the call  
Which The Voice upon the waters  
Preaches solemnly to all:

Hark! old Ocean's tongue of thunder  
Hoarsely calling bids you speed  
To the shores he held asunder  
Only for these times of need:  
Now, upon his friendly strges  
Ever ever roaring, Come,  
All the sons of hope be urged  
To a new, a richer Home

England and her seagirt sisters  
Pine for want in seeming wealth;  
Though the gaudy surface glitters,  
This is not the hut of health:  
O! the honest labour trying  
Vainly bery to earn its bread,—  
O! the willing workers drine,  
Unemployed, untaught, unled

\* Dr. Laing gives the following as an example of what may be done by a labouring man in Australia. John McMillan, a native of Shippoon, in the Highlands of Scotland, had, previous to the year 1840 when he obtained a free passage for himself and family, as bounty emigrants to Port Phillip, been for five or six years a common porter on the streets of Greenock. He had only from five to six shillings altogether when he arrived at Melbourne, and that sum he had received for some petty services on board; but his wife was a stout active Highland woman, and he had nine sons and one daughter, of various ages, from infancy to twenty years. He had no trade or handicraft, but as labour of all kind was in great demand at the time, he obtained 21. a-week as a stone-mason's labourer, and those of his sons who were fit for service of any kind were hired out under various masters. With the first savings of the family he bought a cow, which cost 12*l*.; and another and another were added from time to time, till his herd amounted to—increased and purchased included—to 400 head. In the meantime he had purchased, from the earnings of the family (for a gentleman who had bought 3,000 acres of land, at 1*l*. per acre, which he sold at 5*l*. an acre for clearing—in the hope of making a fortune from its rise in value, fifty-two acres of ground, at 7*l*. an acre, at a place called Brighton, on the sea-coast, within the gulf, about 6 miles from the town. McMillan had this land he had cleared, divided into paddocks with rail fences, and brought into a high state of cultivation; and as land of the same description immediately adjoining had cost 5*l*. an acre for clearing—for it was heavily timbered—the real price of it may be considered as having been 12*l*. an acre. The soil appeared to be light and sandy, but it bore crops of wheat from thirty to forty bushels an acre. McMillan had rented a small farm adjoining his own during the year 1843, and from both he had reaped from 700 to 800 bushels of wheat, and collected sixty tons of straw hay; and he considered himself worth altogether 1,100*l*.